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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 005333

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/21/2013

TAGS: PGOV PTER KISL JO

SUBJECT: MILITARY PROSECUTORS FORMALLY CHARGE 13 IN 2002

PLOT AGAINST US, JORDANIAN INTERESTS

Classified By: Charge David Hale for Reasons 1.5 (b) and (d)

**11.** (U) The Jordanian State Security Court on August 14 formally charged 13 individuals accused of plotting attacks against U.S. and Jordanian targets late last year. Jordanian authorities in December 2002 arrested nine individuals, known locally as the Mafrag cell, for allegedly planning attacks against the U.S. Embassy in Amman and Jordanian military bases they believed were hosting U.S. military personnel. The group included ten Jordanians and three Saudis. Four individuals named in the indictment remain at large. The case is slated to begin in September.

**12.** (U) According to the indictment, the mastermind of the plot is a Jordanian schoolteacher from Mafrag, Faisal Khalidi. Two of the Saudi plotters served as conduits of funds from Saudi Arabia for the operations. The group opted for targets in Jordan when its original plan to send operatives to fight U.S. forces in Afghanistan encountered travel difficulties. Press indicates that during the December raids, security officials also seized weapons and ammunition that the plotters smuggled from Iraq via a Jordanian truck driver, who also is in custody.

**13.** (C) The suspects profess to share a similar ideology with al-Qa'ida, and according to Jordanian press, one of the plotters is a cousin of al-Qa'ida associate Abu Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian citizen. However, Jordanian authorities have been unable to confirm a link between the Mafrag cell and al-Qa'ida.

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**14.** (C) As often happens in Jordan, press reports of the arrests were several months behind the arrests themselves. The news of the arrests hit the press only when the indictment was announced. The GOJ has coordinated its response to this threat with us at every step.

HALE